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ABSTRACT

This overview is intended to acquaint people with the concept and the features of such plans. The author begins with a discussion of the early development and implementation of various continuous learning plans and then focuses on the financial aspects of such a plan--capital outlay and debt service, school plant operation, and school bus and staffing requirements. The author's brief comments on the impact of continuous learning year cycling plans on children, juvenile delinquency, and recreation conclude the presentation. A diagram that outlines various approaches to rescheduling the school year is provided. (Author/DN)

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A CAPSULE PICTURE OF RECOMMENDED CONTINUOUS
LEARNING YEAR CYCLING PLANS THAT CAN LEAD TO
ECONOMY AND THE EXTENSION OF QUALITY EDUCATION

GEORGE ISAAH THOMAS

What Are They?

Continuous Learning Year Cycling Plans provide a continuity of instruction by rescheduling school calendars so vacations are limited to 2 to 3 weeks and interspaced over the full 12 month. Recommended all year school plans provide children with a change of pace at the end of 8, 9, or 10 week learning periods through the 2 to 3 week recess periods. The new school calendars set the stage for improving the quality of education by increasing the amount of instructional time without increasing school costs. This can be done through reducing the amount of student regression and by eliminating tooling down and tooling up activities. Some designs provide additional learning time through the inclusion of extra instructional days.

Students are assigned to groups or streams of children whose vacations are rotated in such a manner that 1 or 2 streams will be in recess at designated periods of time. This automatically reduces the number of attendees and thereby increases school plant capacity. In most communities the reduction eliminates the need for a new school or addition. It may, also, lead to savings through the closing of older schools and a reduction in the number of teachers, supportive staff, school buses, textbooks, and instructional materials. Numerous cost studies have shown that these decreases can lead to dollar savings in local, state, and national budgets.

What They Are Not

1. CLY cycling plans are not student acceleration plans, therefore they do not have to be financed through a transition period by additional appropriations.
2. CLY cycling plans are not voluntary student participation plans, therefore they are not new cost programs like the numerous 4 quarter plans or other multi-mester operations labeled as all year school programs since the turn of the Century.
3. CLY cycling plans do not interrupt the learning process for any prolonged period of time, therefore should not be compared to the staggered or optional quarter, trimester, or quintimester plans which call for year round operation of a school and not a continuous learning year program for children.

Chronology

1. Development

- a. Public resistance to extended winter vacations mandated in plans such as the staggered 4 quarter plan led to the development of the 12-4 Plan during the mid 1960's. Considerable interest was shown in this design, but vacations were still long and it could not be implemented without changes in states requiring a minimum of 180 instructional days plus emergency closing time and the recognition of legal holidays and special days of observance.
- b. The first of the new Continuous Learning Year Plans were created in 1967 as an alternative to student acceleration plans created in New York State and tested to meet a Legislative Mandate to reschedule the school year. These refined term rotation plans fall into the 4 and 5 stream classifications and have saleable features that appeal to the public. Additional funds are not required for implementation, but adjustments in the method of distributing state aid is a pre-requisite in many states.

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- c. A new seven stream Continuous Learning Year Cycling Plan was developed in 1971 for school systems which have a desperate need for additional classroom space. The design will be easier to implement where there is a large school population, therefore may not meet the needs of the small rural school system or the small suburban school district. However, limited experiments with grade rotation at the K to 6 levels show possibilities for all school systems that are worthy of serious consideration. (The barrier will be the common family vacation).

2. Implementation

- a. The Francis Howell Public School District which is located in St. Charles County, Missouri implemented what may be considered the first of the new Continuous Learning Year Programs in July 1969. This 4 stream CLY cycling plan was introduced in the 48 room Becky-David on a mandatory student participation basis to meet a classroom space shortage. This 9-3 Plan calls for 4 nine week learning periods interspaced by 3 week recess periods. While the space objective was realized with the implementation of the new school calendar, the plan received only minimal recognition on a national basis, perhaps because it was limited to only one school.
- b. In 1968, the Valley View, Illinois School Board directed the administrative staff to prepare a new school calendar which would provide relief to the continued need for additional new schools. The staff member released to do the research devised a 5 year school calendar which was implemented on a school wide basis in June 1970. This 4 stream, term rotation or cycling plan was labeled the 45-15 Continuous Learning Year Plan because it was built around a series of 45 instructional days followed by 15 day recess periods. With the support of the State Chamber of Commerce and a favorable press the 45-15 Plan began to attract attention on the national scene. The term, 45-15, became a household word when Parade Magazine, a weekly Sunday supplement carried a story describing the success of the new all year school plan.

The Valley View School District's explosive population growth had exhausted its power to issue bonds to finance sufficient school construction to care for anticipated student enrollments and a mandatory kindergarten program. By scheduling streams of children to school for designated 45 day learning periods followed by mandatory recess periods the school system automatically acquired the equivalent of approximately 1600 additional pupil stations without erecting a new school or addition. In many communities this is the same as the acquisition of 3 new elementary schools without a building program.

The 45-15 Plan was accepted by the parents as an alternative to double session schooling, excessively large classes and other emergency housing measures. It was implemented without a drastic revision of the curriculum or a change in teaching techniques, however, teachers found that the new calendar leads to an increased recognition of the need to individualize instruction and the advantages of teacher teaming. A number of curriculum modifications have been a byproduct of the new program. Flexible teacher contracts make it possible to professionalize the teacher by making him more than a part time employee.

- c. In 1971 school districts faced with enrollment problems in other parts of the country adopted variations of the Continuous Learning Year Plans. Making the headlines for their innovative solutions to their space problems were: Chula Vista, California; Prince William County, Virginia; Mora, Minnesota; La Mesa-Spring Valley, California; and to a limited extent, Chicago, Illinois.

- d. Numerous schools are scheduled to implement Continuous Learning Year Programs in 1972. Schools are reportedly tooling up in many parts of California, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Oregon, Illinois, Vermont, Colorado, etc. These new endeavors are not to be confused with the voluntary student participation all year school plans in operation in Georgia, Florida, Maryland and the proposed Jefferson County, Kentucky plans. In a sense this is primarily due to a difference in the emphasis placed on objectives. Those who see the need to realize space or economy objectives will have to mandate student attendance over the course of the rescheduled school year calendar. Administrators and teachers in these schools will find that their own flexibility will enhance the implementation process and will help them preserve as well as improve the quality of education in their schools while neighboring school districts struggle to preserve existing school programs of merit in the face of inflation and a lack of new tax dollars.

Dollar Values

In 1968 a computer program was developed in New York State to demonstrate how and where dollar savings could be realized from the adoption of various all year school programs. While the cost analysis program needs updating, the earlier studies showed that comparisons of the all year school program costs with regular school year calendar programs must be made with common indexes. Thus, class size, pupil to teacher ratios or bus seat to pupil ratios must be comparable. Reductions in staff must reflect savings in fringe benefit costs as well as a decreased need for supportive staff. Numerous field studies have repeatedly shown that savings in capital outlay and debt services can be augmented by large savings in the operation and maintenance accounts when new schools are eliminated from the drawing boards or when existing schools can be closed. This additional savings will go a long way towards offsetting any increases in operations due to the continued use of school buildings through the summer.

The dollar value of a continuous learning year program will vary in accordance with the nature of the school year calendar adopted and the way the program is implemented. Readiness of a school board to change school boundaries or school bus routes to insure that schools or buses operate close to capacity is a determining factor. In a rapidly growing school district school costs will continue to increase with or without the rescheduling of the school year, but they increase much slower when recommended continuous learning year plans are adopted and will frequently be reflected in a lower per pupil cost. School districts with limited population growth will find that the immediate dollar savings is not as clear cut since there is little savings in the capital outlay and debt service accounts. However, considerable savings can be shown if the reduction factor is used to close old schools or convert some existing buildings to civic or public service centers for other governmental agencies.

1. Capital Outlay and Debt Service Savings

Savings in these areas will depend upon the need for new schools and additions and the nature of the continuous learning year plan adopted. For example:

- a. Five Stream Continuous Learning Year Plans increase school plant capacity by approximately 25% and provide the equivalent of 1 classroom for each four in existing school buildings. Additional space can be acquired by combining the savings from term rotation with the time equalization principles of the Multiple Trails non-acceleration plans with school calendars that provide more than the minimal instructional school year.
- b. Four Stream Continuous Learning Year Plans such as the 9-3 and 45-15 Plan increase school plant capacity by approximately 33% and provide the equivalent of 1 classroom for each 3 in existing school buildings.

- c. Seven Stream Continuous Learning Year Plans increase school plant capacity by approximately 40% and provide the equivalent of 2 additional classrooms for every 5 existing ones.

Savings in capital outlay and debt service charges are possible where new schools or additions to existing schools are not required or where new building needs are reduced. In over 90% of the school systems the new continuous learning year plans eliminate the need for new buildings for at least the next decade. In rapidly growing districts additional school facilities will still be required, but on a smaller scale.

2. School Plant Operation and Maintenance Costs and Savings

Many school plant operation and maintenance costs are fixed charges so will not increase with the year round operation of schools. However, some small increases can be anticipated in areas such as maintenance supplies, utility costs, and custodial vacation replacement costs. As a general rule cost analysis studies show that all new costs can be more than offset by the savings obtained by the reduced need to maintain new school buildings or by the closing of existing schools. In terms of recent average per pupil operation and maintenance costs of \$103, per year the elimination of a new 2,000 pupil school from the drawing boards or the closing of a similar sized school creates a potential saving in operation and maintenance costs of approximately \$206,000. This can go a long ways towards offsetting new costs, even with the introduction of air conditioning and the resulting increase in utility costs.

3. School Bus Requirements and Dollar Savings

The number of school buses required is directly related to the number of pupils in attendance at any particular time. Since recommended continuous learning year plans reduce the number of attendees by 20%, 25%, or 28.6%, fewer school buses will be required for a designated pupil to bus seat ratio. This leads to an immediate savings in capital expense. Fewer school buses means fewer drivers and supportive staff members. While the transportation staff members will have to be compensated in terms of their additional working days, numerous field studies throughout the country show that salary costs will be about the same. Similarly, school bus operating and maintenance costs are balanced out with savings from the reduced number of school buses required for the continuous learning year calendar.

4. School Teacher Requirements and Potential Costs and Savings

Cost analysis studies based on comparing regular and continuous learning year teacher requirements for a common pupil to teacher ratio show that fewer classroom teachers will be required. Here, the critical elements are the number of attendees required for a designated plan and the number of instructional days built into the design. Teacher salaries can be increased commensurate with the number of days of employment added to existing contracts without increasing per pupil costs since the savings from staff reductions and savings in salaries and fringe benefit costs will provide an adequate cushion to meet the new teacher salary costs. Field studies for the 5 stream continuous learning year plans will generally show a break even point if teachers are given full salary adjustments plus a 2 to 3 week vacation similar to those given by local business and industries to their employees. Four and seven stream continuous learning year plans can create a more definitive dollar savings in the instructional salary account since more teaching positions can be absorbed. The ultimate savings and costs will depend upon the flexibility of the staff when it comes to program implementation. Reductions in class sizes will not increase per pupil costs if similar class sizes are considered acceptable for the regular school year program.

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5. Other Costs and Savings

- a. Continuous learning year cycling plans maintain a much higher tax base since less land is taken from the tax rolls when fewer school sites are required.
- b. After the initial planning and implementation period fewer principals and supportive staff members are required since new schools are not built or old ones can be closed. The reduced need for these positions will help to offset salary increases for 10 month employees going to a 12 month contract and for vacation replacements.
- c. Small savings can be realized in the textbook, library, and instructional equipment accounts.
- d. Some continuous learning year plans will not require air conditioning. Again, geography will determine whether air conditioning is a pre-requisite. In many southern states air conditioning is required for the regular school year calendar. However, air conditioning is still considered as a luxury for schools as long as they are operated for 9 or 10 months. Continuous learning year programs may increase the rate of air conditioning of schools. This will lead to some increases in budgets due to installation and operational costs.
- e. Communities which lack year round recreation programs will often find it desirable to employ full time recreation directors. This can be a cost factor.

Other Advantages

Juvenile Delinquency

Police and juvenile authorities contend that they can more readily cope with the problem of juvenile delinquency since fewer students will be on the streets at any one time. The segmentation of the long summer vacation into short vacations reduces the boredom and need to engage in something exciting when established work and study routines are broken.

Year Round Recreation

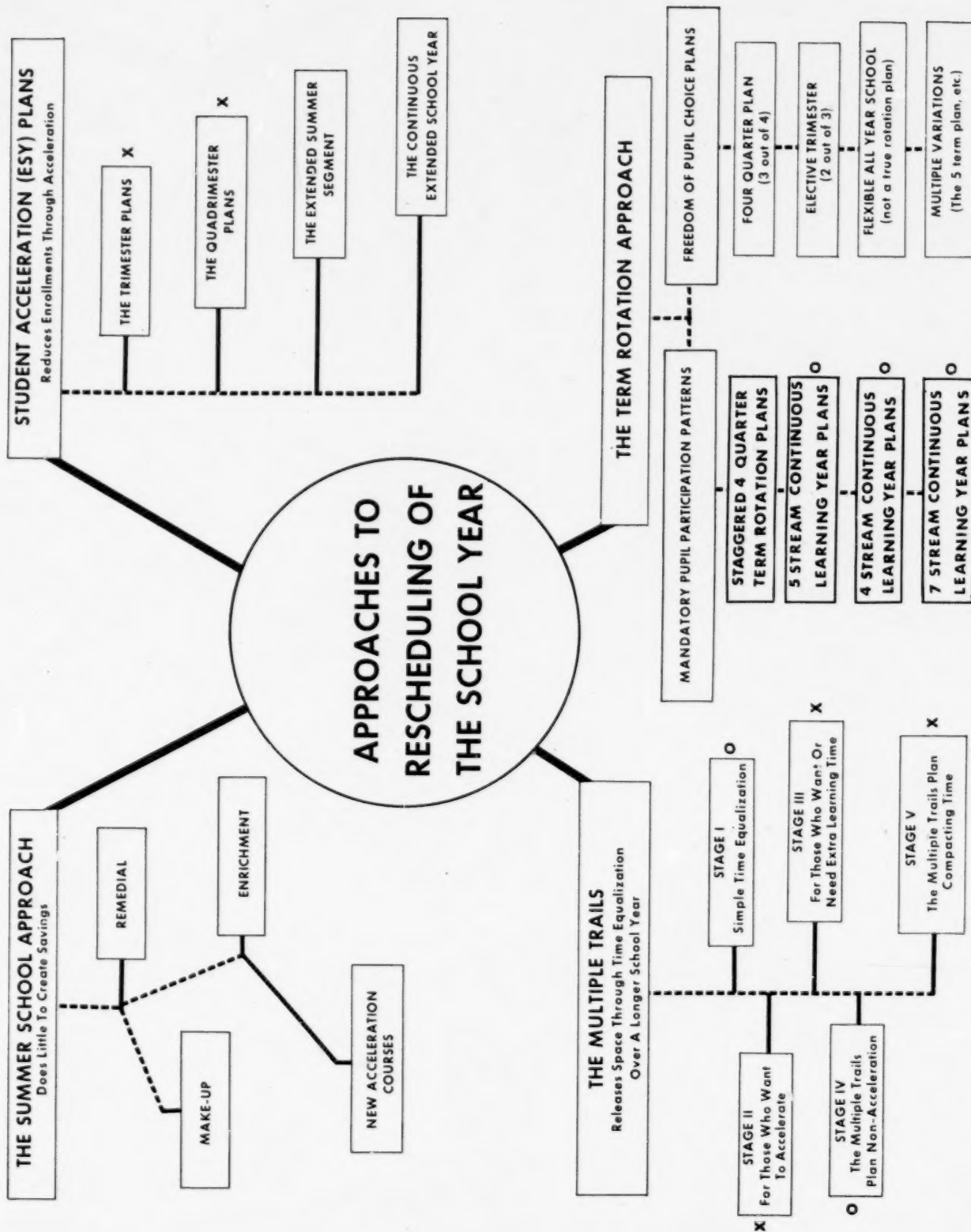
Business and industry can foster year round recreation by allowing employees to take these vacations when children are free. The staggering of employee vacations will increase plant productivity while opening the door to new employment possibilities for high school students and others seeking short term employment. Year round vacationing can be a boon to tourist and resort interests especially with the surging interests in winter sports. Spring and fall camping as well as winter camping for both adults and children becomes a possibility with the new school calendar.

Impact on Children

The potential dollar value of the new continuous learning year plans to society is still unmeasurable. For example, the potential reduction in the rate of student failure leads to savings in human resources.. ie. pupil, teacher, parent, friends, and taxpayers. Again, more disadvantaged children have a chance to reach higher rungs on the educational ladder before they leave school permanently. Non-disadvantaged children can be given additional instructional time to help them cope with the knowledge explosion, the need to engage in time consuming creative learning activities, and the need to acquire work experience or job training.

All children need a change of pace several times during the year. The new school calendars can give them time to relax and get away from school pressures that make some pupils nervous wrecks and rebellious members of society. Hopefully, they will have time to explore the world about them during other than the summer season. G./72.

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